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| **REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE** | | *Form Approved*<br>*OMB No. 0704-0188* |

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| **1. REPORT DATE** *(DD-MM-YYYY)*<br>(13-02-2006) | **2. REPORT TYPE**<br>FINAL | | **3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE**<br>Military-Media Relations: Lessons for the Joint Force Commander | | | **5a. CONTRACT NUMBER** | |
| | | | **5b. GRANT NUMBER** | |
| | | | **5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER** | |
| **6. AUTHOR(S)**<br><br>Brett D. Pennington, Major, USAF<br><br>Paper Advisor (if Any): **N/A** | | | **5d. PROJECT NUMBER** | |
| | | | **5e. TASK NUMBER** | |
| | | | **5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER** | |
| **7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)**<br><br>Joint Military Operations Department<br>Naval War College<br>686 Cushing Road<br>Newport, RI 02841-1207 | | | **8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER** | |
| **9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)** | | | **10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)** | |
| | | | **11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)** | |

**12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**
Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.

**13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES** A paper submitted to the faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.

**14. ABSTRACT**

With the increasing role of the media in society, the military-media relationship is one Joint Force Commanders must understand. To accomplish this, commanders must focus in three areas. First, they must develop an appreciation for the key principles of the two institutions. For the military these principles include operational security, operational capability, and beneficial media coverage. For the media, they are access, market share, and quality of reporting. Second, they should comprehend the history of the military-media relationship and the inadequacies of the media plans used in Vietnam, Grenada/Panama, and Desert Storm. Third, they need to recognize the successes gained though the embedded media program used in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Using this knowledge of the military-media relationship as a foundation, Joint Force Commanders can extract a number of lessons applicable to future operations. These include: learning from the past and focusing on the future, seeking and providing guidance, taking an active role in media operations, being aware of media reports, and knowing the risks associated with embedded media operations. By emphasizing these lessons, commanders can break the paradigm of distrust and skepticism between the military and media, and operate in a mutually beneficial manner.

**15. SUBJECT TERMS**
Military-Media Relations, Embedded, Media, Reporters, Public Affairs, Joint Information Bureau, Television, Newspapers, Press, Press Pool

| **16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:** | | | **17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** | **18. NUMBER OF PAGES** | **19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**<br>Chairman, JMO Dept |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a. REPORT**<br>UNCLASSIFIED | **b. ABSTRACT**<br>UNCLASSIFIED | **c. THIS PAGE**<br>UNCLASSIFIED | | 24 | **19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(include area code)*<br>401-841-3556 |

**Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)**

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE**
Newport, RI

**MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS:**
**LESSONS FOR THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER**

**By**

**Brett Pennington**
**Major, United States Air Force**

**A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature:** _____
Due Date:  13 Feb 2006

### *ABSTRACT*

With the increasing role of the media in society, the military-media relationship is one Joint Force Commanders must understand. To accomplish this, commanders must focus in three areas. First, they must develop an appreciation for the key principles of the two institutions. For the military these principles include operational security, operational capability, and beneficial media coverage. For the media, they are access, market share, and quality of reporting. Second, they should comprehend the history of the military-media relationship and the inadequacies of the media plans used in Vietnam, Grenada/Panama, and Desert Storm. Third, they need to recognize the successes gained though the embedded media program used in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Using this knowledge of the military-media relationship as a foundation, Joint Force Commanders can extract a number of lessons applicable to future operations. These include: learning from the past and focusing on the future, seeking and providing guidance, taking an active role in media operations, being aware of media reports, and knowing the risks associated with embedded media operations. By emphasizing these lessons, commanders can break the paradigm of distrust and skepticism between the military and media, and operate in a mutually beneficial manner.

With the increasing role and influence of the media in society, the military-media relationship has become a key aspect of operational warfare. As such, Joint Force Commanders must take an active role in media relations and must make every effort to understand the complexities of the relationship. The following analysis examines the complex subject of military-media relations in several vital areas and concludes with a number of media-relations lessons for the Joint Force Commander. The areas of analysis include: key principles of the military and the media; historical foundations of the military-media relationship as illustrated in Vietnam, Grenada/Panama, and Desert Storm; and the successes of the embedded media program in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

### KEY PRINCIPLES

*Military*      The most prominent concern of the military when dealing with the media is operational security and operational capability.[1] Joint Force Commanders must, above all else, focus on their objective. If they do not, an entire operation can fail and along with it, the policy of the United States. With the increasing role of the media in military operations, commanders are called upon to support media operations. However, this support has its limits. If at any time the media significantly limits a commander's operational capability or breaches operational security, the commander's enthusiasm and support come to an end.

Commanders focus on operational security since the cost of lapses in this area can be extremely high. Unfortunately, there are examples of such lapses that give military leaders pause. In the days leading up to the ground war in Desert Storm, a CNN reporter stated during a report that if he were to happen across operationally sensitive information, such as when the ground war would begin, he would not hesitate to announce it on the air.[2] Such a claim strikes fear in the heart of any commander.

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Another example commanders may remember is the night landing of U.S. Marines on the shores of Somalia, surprised by a beach full of reporters with blinding lights and television cameras.  Here, operational security was compromised and the force's capability was degraded.  To the combatant commander, such an event cannot happen under their leadership.  As Vietnam journalist Peter Braestrup put it,

> The first amendment assures journalists the right to publish and is interpreted by some journalists as encompassing the right to gather news.  But there is no counterpart in journalism to "duty, honor, country" or to the military leader's ultimate responsibility for life and death.[3]

However, it is likewise clear that the majority of the press show restraint and reasonable operational security.   As an example, during American operations in Somalia, CNN military affairs reporter Jamie McIntyre and the CNN staff delayed the reporting of operational information they had obtained because of concern that doing otherwise would endanger the U.N. effort.[4]  As a further example of restraint, NBC Pentagon correspondent Jim Miklaszewski described NBC holding information during Operations Desert Fox and Allied Force.  He said,

> …we at NBC knew in advance almost down to the minute not only when air strikes would start but when the first missiles would impact.  But we didn't use that information; we sat on it.  We used the information internally to be able to prepare ourselves to report events as soon as we could after that happened.  That was with no explicit agreement with the U.S. government.  It was just our own self-imposed responsibility not to interfere with an ongoing military mission when it could either endanger the mission or lives.[5]

These are two examples where many certainly exist.  However, to the commander, it only takes one mistake to put troops' lives in danger.  As a result, operational security and operational capability are critical issues for the military when dealing with the media.

The next key principle for the military is its desire for media coverage that supports the mission.[6]  The benefits of positive media coverage are substantial.  It can increase public

relations, troop morale, credibility, and domestic support. Furthermore it can expand U.S. military capability by leveraging media technology as part of an overall information operation. The importance of these effects was plainly spelled out in the public affairs guidance from the Secretary of Defense regarding the use of embedded media in Operation Iraqi Freedom. It stated,

> Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the U.S. public; the public in allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations, whose perceptions of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement….We need to tell the factual story, good or bad, before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people in the field need to tell our story….[7]

Consequently, for its many benefits, positive media coverage is a key principle to the military.

*Media*     Just as the military, the media focuses on several key principles. The first of these is access.[8] Without access to a story, the media is muted. They must be able to get to the location, interview the participants, and put the event into the context of the moment. Without access, the story, if it is told at all, is hollow and loses the interest of the public.

In this context, the ability of the media to gain access to a story depends on the type of conflict. Prior to the opening salvos of Operation Enduring Freedom, Taliban ruled Afghanistan was a closed society. Consequently, the ability of the media to operate in the country prior to hostilities was extremely limited. As was cited in a Rand Corporation study covering the military-media relationship, even with American forces, access in Afghanistan proved to be difficult.

> The engagement in Afghanistan was difficult for the press to cover simply because most of the ground elements of the campaign were special operations forces, which move rapidly and covertly over often very rugged terrain and make regular use of classified equipment or techniques, preventing reporters from covering their activities.[9]

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However, in other conflicts, access has been much more straightforward. Once again returning to Mogadishu, we see that even in a country as chaotic as Somalia, the press was able to gain access even before the military was in place. Other examples exist with "images of military personnel performing their tasks while surrounded by reporters who often seem to be regarding them as objects of curiosity."[10] These examples serve to show how important access is and how difficult it can be to obtain. Without it, there is no story.

The second key principle of the media is market share.[11] The media is, in the end, a business. As such, it must generate revenue in order to support its operation. In this regard, meters of performance include such things as ratings and sales. To succeed, the media outlets must have the stories and the information that the public desires. As a result, reporters tend to pursue "good" stories that will grab the attention of the public, for whatever reason. They may also pursue "scoops" or exclusives to edge out their media competition.[12]

The final media principle is the quality of its reporting.[13] Clearly, this is directly related to the other principles in that access leads to better quality reporting which usually increases ratings. By focusing on quality reporting, the media is able to increase its credibility both with the public and with the military. Hallmarks of this principle are accuracy, objectivity, and the personal integrity of the individual reporter.[14] However, commitment to this principle can vary significantly among organizations and reporters.

Consequently, both the military and the media have their own key principles which they value when dealing with each other. Both sides are aware of each others principles and, for the most part, understand them, at least in theory. However, as has been clearly demonstrated throughout history, this understanding is difficult to maintain in practice.

# MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS HISTORY

***Vietnam*** The role of the media in the Vietnam War is a gargantuan subject, with volumes of work dedicated to it. This is where we find the foundation of the military-media relationship that influenced every American military conflict since. The key reasons for this are the role played by television with increased access to the public, the effect of televising true warfare to the public, and the open press policy of the American forces in Vietnam.

As is well known and documented, Vietnam was America's first television war. The advent of television provided journalists with a new technology which gave them unprecedented access to the public. Previous to Vietnam, the primary means of reaching the public was through written media and newsreels. With television however, the media could beam the realities of warfare directly into the living rooms of Americans. These realities were very potent since most Americans knew little about real warfare. While many had served in World War II and Korea, large sections of the population had little direct knowledge about what war was all about. However, with television, they could see it every night, in their own home, even in color. As President Richard Nixon said in his memoirs, "In each night's TV news and each morning's paper the war was reported battle by battle….More than ever before, television showed the terrible suffering and sacrifice of war."[15]

The military's method of dealing with the press in Vietnam can best be described as a laissez-faire policy. Previous wars had seen a great deal of control of the media. However, in Vietnam a hands-off policy was in place. General William C. Westmoreland, the commander of American forces in Vietnam, "opted for a policy of voluntary guidelines for the press over censorship because he trusted the good will of the American correspondents

reporting the war."[16]  Right or wrong in his decision, most would agree that General

Westmoreland did not understand the power of the media.  Essentially, he left the media to

itself to determine what role it would play in the war.

Consequently, Vietnam was a landmark event in terms of the military-media

relationship.  The "perfect storm" was in place with the media having little oversight or

controls placed upon it, remarkable access to the troops, and unlimited access to the

American public.  They leveraged the technology of television and taught American society

the bloody truth of warfare.  While there are numerous opinions regarding the impact the

media had on the war, it is clear that in some degree, the media did much to fuel the fire of

anti-war sentiment.  A critical press, consistently reporting and showing footage that did not

synchronize with the official policies coming from the White House, the Pentagon, and the

theater, operated in an atmosphere increasingly characterized by mistrust and resentment.

Some in the military came to see the media as an enemy, a foe continuously critical of their

profession and the war they fought.  The media, becoming more and more attuned to an era

of questioning the government, doubted the truthfulness and capability of the military.  The

result was a complete lack of understanding and trust between these two organizations.   This

acrimonious relationship has been uppermost in the minds of both the military and media

ever since Vietnam and has played a prominent role in many other conflicts.

*Grenada/Panama*     The ghosts of the Vietnam media experience directly impacted military-

media relations during operations in both Grenada and Panama.  In fact, many American

military leaders of these operations formed their opinions of the press while they served as

junior officers during and immediately following the Vietnam War.  Consequently, as the

need for military operations approached in the Caribbean and Central America, military

leaders sought a means to avoid the pitfalls General Westmoreland had succumbed to years earlier. The answer for Operation Urgent Fury, the invasion of Grenada, was simple-- exclude the media completely.

The media found no friends in its covering of the invasion of Grenada. It received no help in getting to the island and was not allowed to accompany invading troops.[17] Some reporters claimed their boats were fired upon by U.S. forces as they approached the island and many of those that did get there were arrested by American troops.[18] The commander of Operation Urgent Fury, Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, made no apologies for excluding the media from the first two days of the operation.[19] However, afterwards, he realized that there were a number of fallacies in the decision. Three problems are quickly evident.

First, if the media is excluded from a story, it is true that they will be unable to report any news that shows the operation or the military in a negative light. However, they are also unable to report any good stories about the operation. "Buy in" and domestic support is important to a military operation and is exactly what many veterans longed for during the Vietnam War. However, it is impossible for this support to grow out of nowhere.

The second problem is the elimination of a potential information warfare weapon. In some cases, the stories reported by the press, directly or indirectly, can be a part of an information campaign directed at the enemy. A report on the deployment of B-52s to an area may send a strong signal to an enemy about American intentions and resolve. However, without a means of getting this message out, the information campaign is muted.

The third problem with the policy to exclude the press follows closely behind the other two. In the absence of good solid factual information, the media is free to speculate. By omitting the media from the battlefield, commanders cannot expect them to ignore a story

as significant as an American invasion of another nation. Instead, all that is accomplished is the removal of the military perspective and facts. This leaves the media to gather information from indirect sources to complete their stories. Clearly, this does not lead to a relationship that is beneficial to either the commander or the media.

To get an accurate accounting of the decision to shut out the media from Grenada, and in response to the numerous complaints from the media, the Department of Defense commissioned an investigation of the military-media relationship, led by retired Major General Winant Sidle. The Sidle commission was very critical of the government. It made several recommendations to include: public affairs planning should begin as soon as operational planning begins; the military should establish a media pool until such time as open coverage could be arranged; and the military should provide essential logistical equipment to assist reporters covering the operation.[20]

The recommendation of creating a press pool was acted on by the Department of Defense. The press pool was built hand in hand with the press themselves. It was formed in 1984 and consisted of "a small, preselected group of reporters who could be activated to cover late-breaking operations or operations planned in secret."[21] The pool would be given direct access to military leaders and troops. Major news organizations joined the pool quickly, with little concern about exactly how the pool structure would operate.[22] Nevertheless, it appeared to meet everyone's needs. The system allowed for operational security and provided access.

The press pool was utilized for the first time in 1989 for Operation Just Cause, the U.S. invasion of Panama. Unfortunately, the report card was less than spectacular. The operational commander, the Pentagon, and the press all clashed on how, when, and where to

implement the press pool.[23]  In the end, the pool was activated too late to arrive in theater and due to logistical issues, had very little access.  "When reporters finally arrived in Panama City, military escorts barred them from the scene of the fighting.  When the bulk of the press corps arrived to relieve the pool, they too were confined to a local military base."[24]  Claiming the need to maintain operational security, the military once again failed to deal with the media in an effective manner.

With these flawed conflicts, the military-media relationship emerged from the 1980s on shaky ground.  In an attempt to solve what had gone wrong in Vietnam, the military had only poured salt on an open wound and encouraged an atmosphere of continued distrust.  In this environment the two sides prepared for the next war in the deserts of the Middle East.

***Operation Desert Storm***    In terms of the media, Operation Desert Storm was a very different type of war than the others that preceded it.  The first difference was in timing.  Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was a surprise to the United States and Operation Desert Shield had started as a virtual knee jerk reaction to protect Saudi Arabia and U.S. interests in the region.  However, a fairly lengthy preparation time followed where allied forces geared up for war while diplomats negotiated to avoid it.  During this period both the military and the media had time to prepare and to determine how the two organizations would interact.

The second major difference with Desert Storm was technology.  While Vietnam was the first television war, Desert Storm was the first satellite war.  With reporters still able to access Iraq and transmit reports via satellite, people in the United States could see real-time coverage of bombs falling in Baghdad.  American military leaders knew no matter what they did, key portions of this war were going to play out on television, in real time.  As a result, many of the U.S. war plans were designed to limit collateral damage and pinpoint targets not

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simply because of an ethical prerogative or the rules of war, but partially because a bloody war displayed on televisions across America had to be avoided.

However, while no one wanted to relive the Vietnam media experience, no one wanted another Grenada or Panama either. The media held a prominent role in this war and American military leaders had to deal with it decisively. The solution to how to interact with the media came from the recommendations of the Sidle commission and the program that had less than stellar results in Panama, the press pool.

The degree to which the military or the media view the press pool as a success in Desert Storm depends on their perspective. To the media, although not ideal, the concept of the pool system appeared acceptable in design, but the restrictions placed on it made it completely ineffective. Under the pool system the military had to review all stories for security issues, reporters could not discuss sensitive issues such as troop numbers and locations, impromptu interviews with U.S. military officers had to be conducted in public places and on the record, and to operate in a combat area reporters had to be a member of the press pool and be escorted by a military public affairs officer at all times.[25] To CENTCOM and Pentagon leaders, these restrictions seemed entirely appropriate, both for security and logistical reasons. On the eve of the ground war, there were nearly 1,000 reporters anxious to get where the action was.[26] To not control such a mass of humanity, in a combat zone, when they are in the business of providing the world information on your activities, would seem like insanity to most. Assistant Secretary of Defense Pete Williams, now a reporter for NBC news, stated in defending the restrictions,

> American ground units move quickly--some of them by air. To cover the conflict, reporters had to be part of a unit, able to move with it. Each commander had an assigned number of vehicles with only so many seats. While he could take care of the reporters he knew were coming, he could not

have been expected to keep absorbing those who arrived on their own, unexpectedly, in their own rented four-wheel-drives--assuming they could even find the units out west once the war started.[27]

Nevertheless, much of the media felt that they had been kept insulated from the real war. In their eyes, this was most likely done in an attempt by the military to control information and to prevent bad stories. In a letter to then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney from several prominent members of the media, the group criticized the government's handing of the media in Desert Storm. As they said, "…all major news organizations agree that the flow of information to the public was blocked, impeded, or diminished by the policies and practices of the Department of Defense. Pools do not work."[28] However, Secretary Cheney disagreed and was quoted as describing Desert Storm as "the best covered war ever. The American people saw up close with their own eyes through the magic of television what the U.S. military was capable of doing."[29] However, the press did not agree. Supporting their position was a clear fact, "More than 150 reporters who participated in the Pentagon pool system failed to produce a single eyewitness account of the clash between 300,000 allied troops and an estimated 300,000 Iraqi troops."[30]

Although many Americans came away from Desert Storm feeling good about the war and the U.S. military, the military-media relationship was not as cozy. Although improved from the days of Vietnam, it was still characterized by distant skepticism and distrust.

*History Summary*    Consequently, the history of American military-media relations is a turbulent one. Other military operations exist where the two sides clashed, such as operations in Haiti, Somalia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the key foundations of the military-media relationship were set in Vietnam, Grenada/Panama, and Desert Storm. Here we see three examples of how the military can interact with the media: laissez faire,

complete restriction, and press pools. A good understanding of the pros and cons of these approaches and conflicts is a must for Joint Force Commanders.

### *OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND THE EMBEDDED MEDIA*

Over the years prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the press was unhappy with the level of cooperation it received from the Department of Defense. Likewise, during this period the military had come to realize that its press policies were ineffective. Consequently, as Operation Iraqi Freedom approached, the military and media sought a more agreeable arrangement. The Department of Defense knew that it wanted to demonstrate the lies of Saddam Hussein for the entire world to see. As the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke said, "It is in our interest to let people see for themselves through the news media, the lies and deceptive tactics Saddam Hussein will use."[31] The embedded media program was designed to provide the media every opportunity to observe actual combat operations and to see U.S. troops in action.[32] On January 13-17, 2002 50 bureau chiefs of major news agencies met with representatives of the Department of Defense to discuss setting up the ground rules for an embedded press system.[33] The result was the "Coalition Forces Land Component Command Ground Rules Agreement." [34]

The agreement covered a wide range of issues important to both the military and the media. For the military, operational security was addressed. Under the agreement, unit commanders were allowed to restrict the use of some electronic equipment if mission requirements dictated.[35] Furthermore, reporters were prohibited from a variety of activities to include carrying weapons, off-the-record interviews, and giving details about ongoing or future operations.[36] However, the reporters were to have free access to military personnel at all levels and could report general information about troop strength, casualties, and captured

enemy forces.[37]  Reporters were credentialed and very basic military training was provided to those who wanted it.  All in all some 710 reporters were embedded.[38]  Furthermore, another 1,445 were credentialed as "unilaterals," preferring to operate independently.[39]  At its foundation, the agreement struck a balance by addressing the most cherished principles of each side; operational security for the military and access for the media.

However, the use of embedded media went beyond the nuts and bolts of agreements, rules, and regulations.   For a military continually feeling misunderstood and underappreciated, it was an opportunity for America to get to know the men and women of the U.S. armed forces.  As one commander put it in the days following Desert Storm,

> I was upset to find that people did not know that the 3rd Armored Division and VII corps hand been in a very heavy fight…the story was not told well enough about the people who did the fighting--the companies, platoons and task forces…Invariably, if you allow the media to look at what you are doing and put them with the soldiers, it comes out fine.[40]

For the media, it was a chance to tell the stories they had dreamed of.  They were no longer the outsider looking in, trying to place an event in a context they did not understand. As one reporter put it,

> As an embedded journalist, I had an unusual opportunity to not only report on the war but on the American soldiers who fought it.  Instead of being some nosy reporter intruding into the soldier's world, I was part of that world, a person allowed to enter it through official sanction.[41]

While some in the media still felt stifled in the embedded system, many felt they saw the war for an entirely different perspective.  This was the biggest victory of embedded reporting.

Consequently, the embedded reporting system in Operation Iraqi Freedom was seen by most as a success.  Although there were cases of operational security lapses, fewer than half a dozen reporters were disembedded for improper reporting of events.[42]  Regardless, the point is that the soldier's stories got out.  The focus was not on censorship or problems with

the media pool.  Instead it was on the soldier, the people, and the mission.  This is where the embedded system worked.  Furthermore, an entire generation of reporters came to know and understand the media as they had not before.  Well known books such as <u>In the Company of Soldiers</u> by Rick Atkinson and <u>Embedded</u> by Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson document some of the many reports from embedded reporters and authors.  Their reports are not just from individuals who heard about a story or received a briefing, but from men and women who were there, with the troops.

## *LESSONS FOR THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER*

By understanding the key principles of the two organizations and the history they share, a commander has a solid foundation in this complex subject.  From here the Joint Force Commander must look for lessons he can extract and apply to current and future operations.  The analysis and evidence supports the following overriding lessons.

***Think Forward.*** Author Charles W. Ricks wrote <u>The Military-News Media Relationship:  Thinking Forward</u> for the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute.  In it, he advocates one of the most important lessons for the Joint Force Commander--to learn from the past, but focus on the future.  As he puts it,

> To succeed, commanders must "think forward" historically, operationally, and geographically.  The perpetuation of confrontation and debate over events past is not useful.  Attempts to look back and justify specific decisions and actions do help in gaining understanding, but they also serve to reinforce the sense of conflict between the institutions.  As with any operational task, the only relevant lessons of the past are those which can be applied to improve readiness and performance in the future.[43]

The emphasis has to be on learning from the past, not building media plans designed only to avoid the pitfalls of the previous war.  The past is important, but commanders cannot let it be the sole determiner of their view of the future.

*Seek and Provide Guidance*. Military-media relations deal with all levels of warfare: strategic, operational, and tactical. While many decisions regarding the media may be made at the strategic level, it is left to the operational commander to provide fidelity, organization, and direction to a media policy. Commanders must make a policy that works for a given theater and conflict. Furthermore, they must ensure the entire command understands the rules and procedures. However, operational commanders do not function in a vacuum. There is guidance available to commanders from multiple sources. Probably the most important of these is Joint Publication 3-61, Public Affairs. In it, the Joint Staff covers the most prominent factors of media relations to include public affairs fundamentals, organization, responsibilities, and media planning.[44] This publication is not only for the subject matter experts. It provides Joint Force Commanders with vital tools to help them determine how to carry out media relations in an effective, mission supporting manner.

*Take an Active Role.* To expect a good relationship with the media, a commander must provide the media what they require to do their jobs. The most important factors are good Pubic Affairs Officers (PAO) and an effective Joint Information Bureau (JIB). History is full of examples of ineffective PAOs and JIBs. As one reporter put it, "Too often, I hung up the phone and thought to myself, if the Secretary of Defense only knew how one of his PAOs was treating a man about to write a column for national distribution."[45] Regardless of whether dealing with mainstream or embedded media, the Public Affairs staff is the conduit for the flow of information. They exist not to "control the press" or "keep an eye on the media" but to serve as facilitators between the press and the military. As a reporter commented, "PAOs need to get more knowledgeable about the specifics of what their organizations are doing."[46] They need to understand the media and cease being a filter for

information and become actively engaged in making sure information gets out the door.[47] This active role is critical to ensure the military-media relationship has a solid footing.

   *Know What The Media is Saying.* Joint Publication 3-61 explains the importance of media analysis, or simply put, being aware of what the media is reporting.[48] One of the most innovative and effective actions taken during Operation Iraqi Freedom was the creation of a media analysis cell in the 1 MEF. Its mission was to provide commander's with: media feedback, a method to ensure embedded and unilateral reporter compliance with ground rules, and a method to predict media trends.[49] Such an organization enabled the operational commander to function as an active participant in the media message rather than simply a disinterested or innocent bystander. Such an approach is a must for any commander.

   *Know The Risks*. In addition to operational security there are other risks associated with any media policy, to include embedded media. While the evidence shows that the embedded media program was a success, it operated in a very rapid, lopsided conflict. In a more bloody war, the embedded reports may have been much more difficult for a commander to accept. Furthermore, the presence of the media in front-line units may affect the conduct of operations. Do troops behave the same with a reporter and a camera next to them as they do without it? Likely, they do not. Additionally, with increased media presence there are greater opportunities for events to be misunderstood or taken out of context. Even with good factual reporting, small events, at the lowest tactical level, can become strategic issues when played on television to an international audience. What may be collateral damage to the military may play out very differently through the media. As a final risk, reporters may present a very limited view of a war. Reports from one specific unit can paint a conflict in a light that misses the "big picture" and can result in a "soda-straw"

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view presented to the public.[50]  As such, commanders must ensure the media has the entire

story, not just a small segment.

Consequently, there are a number of risks, beyond operational security, associated

with media operations.  While these risks may be inherent with media operations, they must

nevertheless be accounted for.

### *CONCLUSION*

Consequently, the military-media relationship is a complex issue.   The United States

military has come a long way from the days when General William Sherman said, "I hate

newspapermen.  They come into camp and pick up their camp rumors and print them as facts.

I regard them as spies, which, in truth, they are.  If I killed them all there would be news from

Hell before breakfast."[51]  Both the military and media have grown in their understanding and

appreciation of each other.  However, the road has been a bumpy one.

Nevertheless, the military-media relationship is one Joint Force Commanders must

grasp fully.  To be effective, they must understand the key principles of the two institutions.

They must comprehend the history of this relationship and the inadequacies of the media

plans used in Vietnam, Grenada/Panama, and Desert Storm.  Finally, they must see the

successes gained though the mutually beneficial embedded media program used in Operation

Iraqi Freedom.   From all of this, they can draw their own conclusions and search for lessons

they can apply to their theater, to increase the chances of success, while minimizing the

likelihood of failure.  By learning from the past and focusing on the future, seeking and

providing guidance, taking an active role in media operations, being aware of media reports,

and knowing the risks, commanders can do much to break the paradigm of distrust and

skepticism between these two institutions and usher in an even more cooperative era.

<div align="center"><em>NOTES</em></div>

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[4] Charles W. Ricks, <u>The Military-News Media Relationship:  Thinking Forward</u> (Carlisle Barracks, PA:  U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1993), 22.

[5] Jim Miklaszewski, interviewed by Sean S. McKenna, in "Breaking News:  A Study of The Effects of Live Television News Coverage during Armed Conflicts" (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2000), 123.

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[9] Ibid., 50.

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[24] Schmeisser, 22.

[25] Pete Williams, "The Persian Gulf, the Pentagon, the Press," <u>Defense 91,</u> (May/June 1991): 10-15.

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[47] Ibid.

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